

EFPP Research

An area requiring further attention is that of research in the field of current psychoanalytic theories and practice. One area that shows potential for further development is primarily that of clinically-based research, where the clinicians themselves can contribute in a more integrated way through the systematic documentation of their own clinical work. This type of research is now being done in many European countries with positive results. This is becoming increasingly urgent as insurance companies and health authorities in many European countries have cut back on funding for psychotherapy and will only fund solid, evidence-based therapies. The dissemination of research now available from an increasing number of specific studies in the field of psychoanalytic psychotherapy and its effectiveness is a primary task for the EFPP.

In this way we hope all our member organisations and countries will have access to study- based research which they can use when making a case for psychotherapy in their own countries. To do this the EFPP website reports on this field's main findings to allow continuous and interactive communication among member organisations.

Proposed Recommendation

Good practice for psychoanalytic training institutes:

I. Possessing a systematic review of research on the effectiveness and efficiency of psychotherapy methods included in the training curriculum.

II. Cooperation —within training, scientific, or other committees responsible for developing psychotherapy training programs in given institutions—with individuals actively conducting scientific research in the field of psychotherapy at higher education institutions (in the local country or abroad). Such cooperation could possibly result in research projects conducted with universities. Specialists from universities can be invited to teach the courses related to research.

III. Including coursework within the training program dedicated to psychotherapy research, aimed at developing skills in critical analysis and application of research findings in clinical practice.

Regarding I. Systematic Review of Research

- It is recommended that the psychoanalytic training institute has sufficient knowledge and is able to demonstrate that its training program is based on the best available scientific evidence. This knowledge should be grounded in a systematic literature review covering the last 25 years. The review may be conducted independently by the training institution if one is not available in scientific databases, or through gathering existing systematic reviews and meta-analyses and then preparing a synthesizing report.
- It is advisable to include different types of research applied in psychotherapy that provide evidence from various perspectives, including:
 - Qualitative studies, including case studies
 - Process research analysing mechanisms of change

- Correlational and longitudinal studies
 - Randomized controlled trials (RCTs)
- Such methodological diversity allows for a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, and mechanisms of action of the therapeutic methods taught within the program.
- The review should be updated every 2–3 years and contain a clearly defined objective and search criteria, include major scientific databases, and apply transparent inclusion criteria. It is recommended to collect findings regarding the effectiveness of psychotherapy in relation to major diagnostic categories, such as depression, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, CPTSD, PTSD, OCD, bipolar disorder, psychotic disorders, and complex (comorbid) disorders, taking into account both categorical and dimensional approaches.
- The section devoted to mechanisms of change should present findings on key processes contributing to psychoanalytic psychotherapy outcomes such as cognitive flexibility, mentalization, cognitive distortions, insight, but also emotion regulation.
- Another valuable component would be the analysis of research gaps, identification of insufficiently explored areas, unresolved issues, and discussion of possible contraindications to certain therapies and potential adverse effects.
- Additionally, it is recommended to include findings on the formats and components of therapist training, including the role of supervision and competence monitoring within a given modality.

Recommended syllabus: Research in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy /Psychoanalysis

Learning objectives

By the end of the course, participants should be able to:

- Distinguish between different approaches to research in psychoanalysis (empirical vs. clinical case)
- Understand the importance of research for the validity and development of psychoanalytic theory and practice
- Identify the basic characteristics of high-quality case study research
- Recognize the possibilities and limits of research in psychoanalysis
- Formulate a preliminary research question with guidance

Research in psychoanalysis – why and how

- Historical tension between psychoanalysis and empirical research
- The relevance of research for contemporary psychoanalytic practice
- Quotation from Otto Kernberg: a call for a “research injection” into psychoanalytic institutes
(Research and Critical Thinking in Psychoanalysis, NCP, 2020)
- Research possibilities: qualitative research, single case studies, research on change in therapy, neuroscience, etc.
- Brief illustration of Fonagy’s approach (a new epistemic framework)

Recommended reading:

Fonagy, P. (2015). *A new epistemic framework for psychoanalysis*. Open Door Review, Third Edition. p. 42 (Foreword) and pp. 48–53.

Chiesa, M. (2010). Research and Psychoanalysis: Still Time to Bridge the Great Divide? *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 27(2), 99–114.

Case studies as a research tool

- The difference between a clinical case and an empirical case study (Clinical Investigations and Ethics in Psychoanalysis, 2019)
- What turns a case study into a research text: research question, variables, transparency, reflexivity
- Discussion: How can we derive research questions from everyday practice?
- Working with an example (a short excerpt from a case study → research questions)

Recommended reading:

Willemsen, J., Rosa, E. D., & Kegerreis, S. (2017). Clinical case studies in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic treatment. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, Article 108.

Gazzillo, F., Waldron, S., Genova, F., Angeloni, F., Ristucci, C., & Lingardi, V. (2014). An empirical investigation of analytic process: Contrasting a good and poor outcome case. *Psychotherapy*, 51(2), 270.

Possibilities for one's own research work + reflection

- Introduction to creating a mini-project (research question, design, ethics)
- Discussion of concrete possibilities (e.g. tracking themes in one's own journal, self-reflection, observing change in therapy)
- Ethical aspects of publishing clinical data
- Inspiration from abroad: at some universities, research courses for trainees already exist (e.g. the MAJO course on addictions – not publicly available, but it can serve as an inspiration or a potential opportunity for collaboration)

Course output (optional)

- Mini-project proposal: a brief concept of a research question plus a possible plan for how to work with it (does not have to be carried out; it can serve as a basis for later work or supervision)

Possible follow-up

- Online course, peer group
- Summer school